

# GOOD WORK

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# LIES, WASTE, & AESTHETICISM



HERE IS an old saying that "honesty is the best policy." This is true if we take it as a statement as to the results of honesty, but it does not tell us why dishonesty is wrong. A deception is not wrong because it has inconvenient results, but because it is an offensive against the way things are, a contradiction of reality, a defiance of what actually is. It is, for this reason, absolutely wrong, wrong in principle, and even if it resulted in happiness would continue to be wrong. The aspect of reality with which a lie is incongruent is its intelligible aspect, its truth. A lie flouts truth.

Another venerable piece of advice warns us, "waste not, want not." This, too, is a statement of the inconvenience of a wrong. If you waste things, you are apt to suffer the inconvenience of not having the use of them. But waste is wrong absolutely because it, too, is a defiance of reality; in this case, a contradiction of being in its goodness. Everything in creation has some use or it would not have been created. Not all things, perhaps, are directly useful to man, but many certainly are—as, water for the quenching of thirst, plants and animals for food, timber and stone for building. To waste these things is obviously to lack what is wasted, and that may be inconvenient, but this is not the essential evil of waste. The absolute wrong comes from the fact that a being created to supply certain services to other beings has been denied the achievement of its destined end.

In a commercially minded culture such as ours, ideas of money are wrongly associated with waste. Waste is often

considered innocent if we have enough money to replace the thing we have wasted. Indeed, such waste is even regarded as a virtue, for it helps to keep the wheels of industry turning. But if I waste timber, fuel or food, these good things are wasted whether or not I am rich enough to replace them. I have prevented them from achieving their teleological destinies. "Don't break the shovel, Willy," we once heard a mother say; "it's Saturday and the stores are closed."

May it be, perhaps, that what applies here to truth and goodness may also apply to beauty? St. Thomas referred to beauty as *id quod visum placet*—that which being seen, pleases—and this is commonly quoted as his definition of beauty. Assuredly it is no such thing. It is not a statement of what beauty *is*, but of how it *acts*—not in being known, nor in being used, but in being enjoyed. This common misunderstanding of the four words gives comfort and support to those who want to believe that enjoyment is the end of beauty, and that things should be made beautiful in order that they may give pleasure. This belief is the central point of aestheticism, and contradicts the classical view that so far as beauty may be said to have an end, its end is the perfection of the beautiful thing's *operation*. In this connection, Philip Hagreen has written that "a glance around any Catholic church will show the curse which falls on those who seek what pleases them, or what they think will please others, instead of seeking rightness in making." We may add that a glance around almost any exhibition of contemporary painting or sculpture will, in its own way, teach us the same sad lesson.

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty are called transcendental predicates, which



means that they are qualities which may be attributed to anything whatever to the extent that the thing is perfect of its kind. Truth is perfection as intelligible, goodness is perfection as useful (in the full sense of useful), and beauty is perfection as intuitable. Falsehood is a perversion of truth and becomes lying when intentional. Waste is a perversion of goodness, sinful if intentional, sinless if done in ignorance. Aesthetic pleasure-seeking likewise may be innocent but, even so, it is baneful in its results, because it is a perversion of beauty. Though it seeks beauty, it results in ugliness. The

aesthete is not seeking essential rightness in what he makes, but a perverted conception of one of perfection's aspects.

We oppose aestheticism not only on account of its inevitable disappointments, but on account of its essential unsoundness. We oppose the relativism that veils the basic kinship between the sister evils of falsehood, waste, and ugliness, and that disguises the danger of misinterpreting the simple statements, "honesty is the best policy", "waste not, want not," and "beauty is what pleases." These adages are true as statements about effects, but false as statements about principles.

# CRAFTSMANSHIP IN AN INDUSTRIALISED WORLD

by ERIC GILL

The conflict between Industrialism and the ancient methods of handicraftsmen which resulted in the muddle of the nineteenth century is now coming to its term.

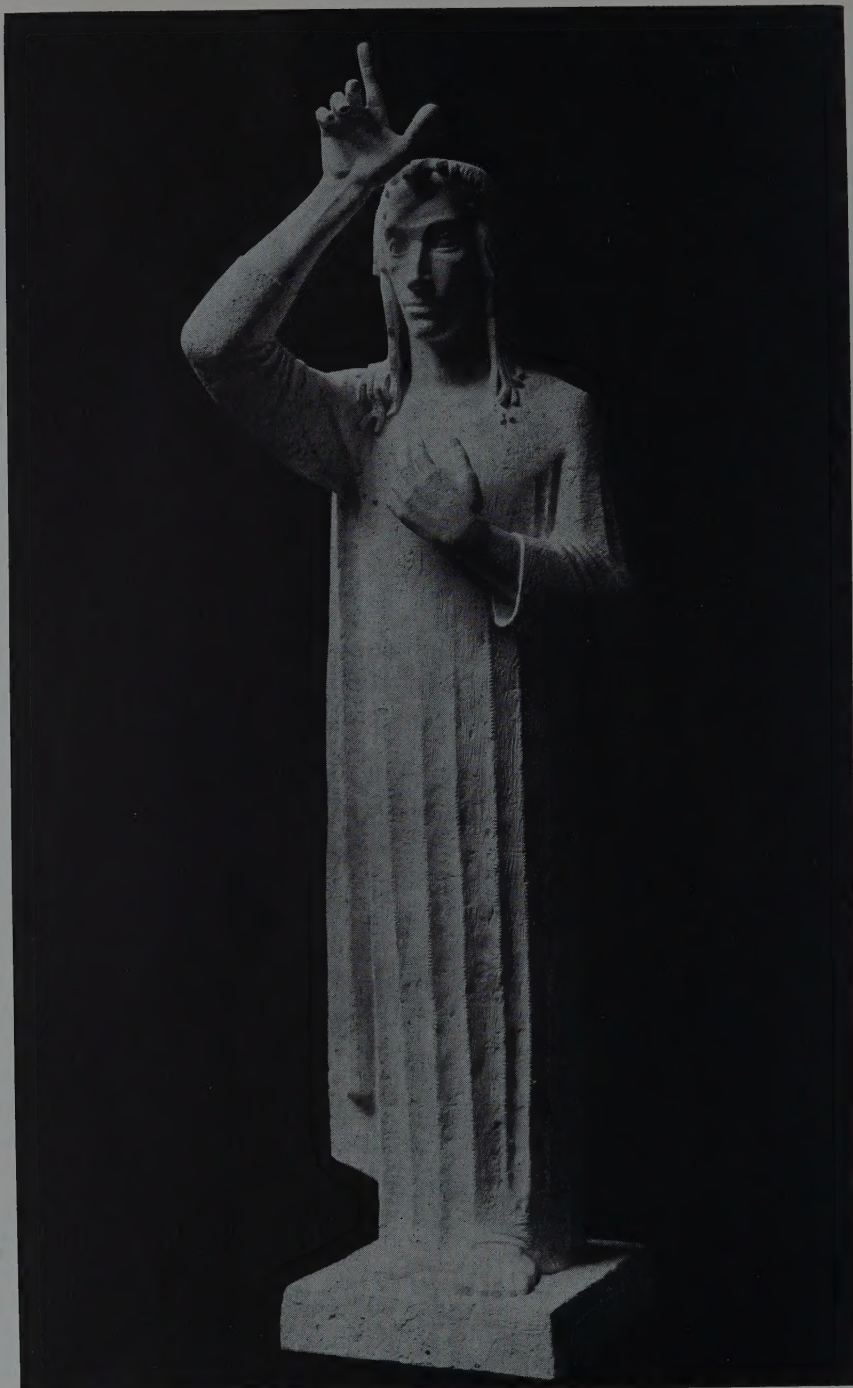
But though Industrialism has now won an almost complete victory, the handicrafts are not killed, and they cannot be quite killed because they meet an inherent, indestructible, permanent need in human nature.

The two worlds can see one another distinctly and without recrimination, both recognizing what is good in the other—the power of Industrialism, the

humanity of craftsmanship. No longer is there any excuse for confusion of aim, inconsistency of methods or hybridism in production; each world can leave the other free in its own sphere.

Whether or not Industrialism has "come to stay" is not our affair, but certainly craftsmanship will be always with us—like the poor. And the two worlds are now absolutely distinct. The imitation "period work" and the imitation handicrafts merchants alone are certainly doomed. Handicrafts standards are as absurd for mechanised industry as machine standards are absurd for the craftsman.

*These few sentences are quoted by courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Sheed and Ward, from Eric Gill's preface to his book, An Essay on Typography. We reprint them here because they summarize the views of one of the most lucid thinkers of modern times on a matter with which he was vitally concerned throughout his working life, and one about which there is still much confusion. Whether or not we agree with Eric Gill's judgement, we can at least be grateful that he has stated his view with his accustomed clarity.*



*CHRIST, LIGHT OF THE WORLD. Model for life-size bronze figure by Waldemar Raemisch, German sculptor and industrial designer. In 1936 he executed the famous bronze eagles and other decorations for the Olympic Games in Germany. He came to the United States in 1939, and headed the sculpture department at the Rhode Island School of Design in 1941. He died in 1955 in Rome, where he was supervising the founding of his heroic figures for the Juvenile Court in Philadelphia.*



# COINS AND MEDALS OF THE POPES

by GRAHAM CAREY

*The pieces illustrated in this article are enlarged to twice their actual size. They are from the collection of Coin Galleries, 123 West 57th Street, New York, by whose courtesy they are reproduced here.*

## THE NUMISMATIC ART

COINS AND MEDALS are small disks of metal, base or precious, on which letters and images have been stamped by striking these disks between dies of a harder material. Coins and medals do not differ in the techniques by which they are produced and the materials of which they are made. The difference between them is one of function—coins being tokens of quantitative value for commercial use, and medals being tokens of qualitative value, symbols of ideas, often connected with religion. In the beginning, coins and medals were hardly distinguishable from each other, but with the centuries their uses have diverged and specialized.

The earliest Greek coins were small blobs of silver, gold or electrum, the purity and weight, and therefore the value of which, were guaranteed by the state that issued them by means of an official punch mark. The button of precious metal was placed on an anvil of some sort and the punch was hammered into its surface from above. Much as a Mesopotamian ruler guaranteed the authenticity of a letter or edict which he had dictated by pressing his signet into the moist clay or, later, as written letters were sealed with impressed wax, so the state authority stamped the state mark on bits of metal to authenticate their official exchange value.

At this stage, it must have been im-

mediately noticed that the blow on top of the bit of metal caused any roughness or scratch on the surface of the anvil below to be transferred to the under side of the coin. This fact was developed into the intentional carving of the anvil surface with an intaglio pattern, which the blow from the hammer transferred to the underside as a relief. This pattern came



*Figure 1. Grotesque carving representing a medieval coiner, from the capital of a pillar in the church of St. Georges de Bocherville, in Normandy. In his left hand he holds the punch which he is about to hammer into the blank on the anvil before him.*





*Figure 2. Impression of the punch from the back of an early Greek coin. This impression is called the "incuse square". The marks on this square are probably mint marks. The opposite side of the coin will show the pattern impressed on it by the anvil.*

to be the most significant one, and the blow of the punch left often no other mark than that of the square section of the punch itself. Figure 1 is from a grotesque Medieval representation of a "moneyer" of the period using this method. Figure 2 shows the "incuse square", as it is called, in a Greek coin of the 5th century. From this rather crude system of blank punch and ornamented anvil faces, slowly developed the use of two dies—hard pieces of metal between which the silver or gold blank was squeezed. But although the two dies are now usually very much alike, the historical distinction between anvil and punch has been maintained, and we still speak of the obverse and reverse side of a coin, or its head and its tail.

During the Middle Ages in Europe, and also in the East, it was customary to use for blanks circles snipped from sheet metal, rather than individually melted-up buttons. The metal, particularly in the case of gold coins, was often quite thin, and was easily bent under the rough handling of the market place. Figures 6 and 7 show the effect of the thinness of the metal characteristic of the coins of early Christendom. The Greek coin with its domed upper and flat lower side has a quite different effect from the later

ducat, florin or louis of our own era.

But whether the coin was struck with a punch on an anvil, or between dies, and whether it was a melted-up or a bit of trimmed sheet metal, the important distinction as regards numismatic quality of the end product is the question of *how* the striking surfaces are shaped. There are two ways of shaping the striking surface. Either the metal may be moved aside by hammering dents into it, or else the necessary hollows are made by cutting pieces of the metal surface out. The denting process is called *punching*, and the cutting out process is called *engraving*. The dies are punched or engraved when the metal is in as soft a state as possible, after which it is hardened before it is used to strike its shape into the final material. The typical depression caused by punching is the round dot, which appears as a small bead in relief on the coin. The typical depression caused by engraving is the linear furrow, and this appears on the coin as a line in relief. In all early coins the design is usually a manifest arrangement of these basic shapes, the dot and the line. These early designs have been called "telegraphic" in that they consist of dots and dashes. Much of the beauty of the handsomest



*Figure 3. Gold ducat of Pope Julius II, 1503-1513. Ancient Greek coins were generally blobs of metal separately melted, but most medieval coins were made from thin metal sheets. The thinness of the sheet often caused bending, as in this example.*



primitive coins comes from the frank acceptance of these simple graphic elements and the formal skill shown in their arrangement. Figures 4 and 5 show a coin so designed. Until the nineteenth century, the beauty of coins is rooted in the realistic development of the productive actualities of the numismatic art.

I do not think that it is an over-simplification to say that until the end of the Middle Ages in the West, and for centuries longer in the East, the numismatic art was healthy, its products decent and often very beautiful. The makers of coins remained within the limits of their craft. With a simple message to convey, they said it simply. The message was to be read, so they tried to make it legible, and this implied good scale relationships both within the coin itself and with the size of the human body. Small images were presented in their most significant profiles. Because low relief was suitable to the striking technique and because, when subject to the wear of use, high relief causes illegibility, the coin and its decoration were kept flat. Large, flat areas of field were avoided because they made striking difficult. Those die-sinkers made few aesthetic blunders because there were few forces to disturb the normal and healthy action of the artistic causes of their craft. Often their work was crude, but it was rarely ugly or vul-



Figure 4. This gold piece of the eighth century A.D. shows die-sinking at its most primitive. The dies between which the coins were struck were engraved with lines or punched with dots, which became raised lines and dots on the coin.



Figure 5. The method by which the royal portrait, the cross and the lettering were crudely formed has been called "telegraphic", as it consists of dots and dashes. In skillful hands this method is the basis of the finest coin designs of the past.

gar. The dictates of the *recta ratio* kept the numismatic artists in line, and their products decent.

### RENAISSANCE CONFUSIONS

But this health and normality were not to endure. With the decline of the Middle Ages there began a steady decline in the beauty of coinage, and this decline is easy to trace directly to its historic causes. Forces began to appear that were irrelevant to the mere *making of things well*. These forces developed and multiplied and have ultimately changed completely the quality of numismatic products. They have appeared in two distinct waves, at different periods and from different directions. The first set of irrelevancies was part of the general *ethos* of the Renaissance, and the second set resulted from the commercialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the technical development that accompanied it.

If a sound traditionalism consists in an attitude of respect for what good was done, what truth was known, and what beauty was achieved by those who have gone before us, and in a complementary determination to avoid past evils, falsehoods and indecencies, no one need be ashamed to be called a traditionalist. But too often this name is applied to one who





Figure 6. Gold ducat of Pope Eugene IV, 1431-1447. A beautifully simple and legible treatment of the papal arms, composed of engraved lines. The letters are punched, a letter being built up with punches each of which gives only parts of a letter.

venerates past ideas and achievements not so much because they were demonstrably right as because they have, in fact, happened. Too many people still show reverence for the errors that characterize the Renaissance period, and seem to include the effects of these errors in their concept of "tradition". This is true alike of those who trust and of those who distrust the idea of tradition. They cling to what they like, or reject what they dislike, not so much on the merits or demerits of those things as on the supposed merits or demerits of the period that produced them.

The characteristic faults of the Renaissance are not difficult to recognize today. Historically they are understandable, but their artistic results are none the less deplorable. In the field of numismatics, their effects are obvious. Among these faults is the emphasis on worldly grandeur in ecclesiastical affairs. This shows clearly in the treatment of heraldic bearings.\* Compare, for example, the simple dignity of the plain bend of Eugene IV (Figure 6), of the oak tree of Sixtus IV (Figure 7), both of the fifteenth

century, with the flamboyant and ostentatious treatment of the arms of Innocent XI late in the seventeenth century (Figure 8).

This pompousness is allied with another fault—the multiplication of ideas to be expressed. Instead of putting forward a single idea in simple symbolic form, there is the tendency (as in many bookplates of our own day) to get as many symbols as possible into a single design, and this results in confusion, bad scale, and illegibility. Figure 6 shows the tiara, the keys, the shield with a plain bend, and the inscription EUGENIUS P.P. QUARTUS. Figure 8 is a typically Baroque assemblage; three bars, six cups, a lion and an eagle on the shield, and besides the tiara and the keys, a cherub's head, swags, garlands, and palm leaves writhing around it. The neurasthenic restlessness, ostentation, and theatricality that so degrades the whole Baroque style is also a fault which appears to some extent in the coinage, but chiefly when the design contains figures.

It is important to realize that at any particular time the artistic state of the



Figure 7. Gold ducat of Pope Sixtus IV, 1471-1484. A beautifully simple and legible treatment of the pontiff's arms, the oak tree of the della Rovere family. Sixtus IV was the first pope to follow the example of worldly monarchs in having coins struck with his own effigy on them.

\* "The use of coats-of-arms by bishops and others is provided for by the Western Church, but it is a meaningless archaism and ecclesiastical heraldry (like all heraldry, debased already by the Renaissance) is thoroughly degenerate; in the U.S.A. it is an absurdity." *A Catholic Dictionary*, Edited by Donald Attwater. Macmillan, New York, 1957. Page 226.





*Figure 8. Silver scudo of Pope Innocent XI, 1676-1689. This piece of ostentatious heraldic flamboyance reflects the artistic spirit of the times rather than the character of the pontiff, who was a man of remarkable piety and humility.*

papal coinage has nothing to do with the personality of the occupant of the papal chair. General artistic tendencies show a slow rhythm in history, while the character of a single pontiff changes with each reign. The coin we have just been noticing exemplifies this well. Though worldly and ostentatious in its conception, it was issued in the name of a most modest and saintly man, a model of personal and episcopal integrity. Many touching stories have been handed down concerning Innocent XI, who for ten years wore the same ragged soutane, and who avoided any demonstration of popular esteem. At the other end of the scale we have a fine coin like that of Sixtus IV (Figure 7) during whose unfortunate reign the Church became secularized as never before, a man who though he pat-

ronized all the finest artists of his time, allowed the college of cardinals to reach the nadir of utter worldliness. At all times the popes have employed the artists who were available at those times, and they have never been directly responsible for the artistic fashions of their period. The purification of the artistic house is the job of those that dwell in it.

The enthusiasm of the Renaissance for the newly developed sciences of perspective and anatomy also become faults when they are allowed to interfere with the essential two-dimensionality of a coin. They tend to draw attention away from the surface at which one is actually looking to the imagination of mental images that they suggest. I shall discuss this matter in a moment. But although the integrity of the coins they influenced





*Figure 9. Gold Eagle from the U.S. Mint, designed by Augustus Saint Gaudens. This piece shows sensitiveness to the beauty of the sitter, and great skill in recording this in clay relief, but no understanding of the realities of coin design. It shows the beauty of a girl, but is not a beautiful piece of gold.*

was injured by the fashionable predilections for grandeur, complication, restlessness, and illusion which were among the failings of their time, a technically sound tradition was maintained. Lettering remains dignified and straightforward. Such mechanical innovations as were developed were concerned with the striking process rather than with die-sinking, and are in no way responsible for the general artistic decline.

### INDUSTRIAL CONFUSION

The changes that were responsible for the further degradation of coins and medals were of an entirely different kind, had different origins, and came about much later. These changes were the results of the technical developments that were so important a part of the industrial revolution. Complicated and ingenious mechanisms were invented which liberated the coin maker from the necessity of working with punches and gravers on hard steel, and enabled him to maintain himself as an "artist" in the new sense which that word was acquiring.

Instead of shaping and tempering steel

punches, and with these shaping steel dies which in turn he must harden and temper, the designer could ignore all such blacksmith work and in his well-lighted studio model large reliefs in clay or plasticene. These when cast could, in one procedure, be reduced in size and cut in steel by a precision instrument known as the pantographic die cutter. Today, practically all coins and medals are produced by this method. It is an easy one, but almost without exception its products are ugly and vulgar, even when most talented and sensitive designers have been employed. These are harsh words, but not to use them is not to state our problem—and to state our problem clearly is half way to solving it. The reasons why the use of large scale modeling, pantographic reduction and mechanical die cutting give inferior results are easy to understand. These reasons can be quite clear to any person of intelligence who wants to understand them. I shall try to explain the defects of our present system clearly. Its results can be seen all around us.

The perception of beauty has its subjective side. Beauty cannot be perceived by a person insensitive to it. The perfection, however, which we experience as beauty, is objective. It is the perfection of the thing itself, and not a subjective quality read into it by a process of empathy. Coins and medals are no excep-



*Figure 10. This rather run-of-the-mill Greek silver piece is actually a handsomer object than Saint Gaudens' labored work. The Greek concentrated on the realities of material and means, rather than on the exact appearance of another beautiful thing.*





Figure 11. Silver denier of Pope St. Leo IV, 847-855. In this primitive coin the letters are punched. The state of society is suggested by the fact that this pontiff crowned King Alfred the Great.



Figure 12. Silver grosso of Pope Clement VI, 1342-1352. Fine example of punched letters. Only the cross and circles are engraved. Each letter is built up with several punches.



Figure 13. Gold ducat of Blessed Urban V, 1362-1370. The lily of Florence. The letters are punched. The lily and its delicate hatching are engraved.



Figure 14. Silver giulio of Pope Hadrian VI, 1522-1523. This is our first example with single punches for each letter. Also our first example of rows of dots made by double punches.



Figure 15. Gold scudo of Pope Sixtus V, 1588-1590. A well distributed design, but heraldry is degenerating, as shown in the shape of the shield.



Figure 16. Gold scudo of Pope Urban VIII, 1623-1644. "The woman clothed with the Sun". Direct work on the die with punch and graver give this coin a dignity not found in modern treatments of the same theme.



*Figure 17. Silver scudo of Pope Clement XI, 1700-1721. A straightforward portrait of this pious, charitable, and brilliant man, but there is a tendency to emphasize irrelevancies in the details of dress.*

tion. A beautiful coin is a perfect coin, whose perfection can be intuitively recognized, and this perfection consists in a just balance or order among the realities that go to make it.

A perfect coin will achieve its purpose and therefore be legible, and this means good scale and heraldic simplicity.

The material of a perfect coin—bronze, silver or gold—must have been handled in a way that manifests the specific beauties of that material.

A thing struck between metal dies which have been shaped by metal punches and gravers will, if perfect, express the technique that formed it. A large clay relief may have beauty, too, but it will be the beauty of clay, and of modeling. If we mix these beauties, the result is not increased beauty but contradiction. In their incongruity they tend to destroy one another.

A perfect coin is the result of direct control by an artist's mind over an artist's hand. This control is lost when mind and hand are separated. When the undistracted eye sees such a perfect coin, the mind immediately rejoices in the sight.

The head of Liberty which decorates the twenty-dollar gold-piece (Figure 9) is a pantographic reduction of a large clay relief modeled by a skillful and sensitive artist, Augustus St. Gaudens, who used as his model a very beautiful young woman. We can sense her beauty, but the coin itself is an aesthetic failure. We are enjoying an imaginary, not a real, beauty. This is the paradox of the beautiful picture of the ugly thing, and the ugly picture of the beautiful thing. This is a rather ugly coin which shows us a very beautiful girl. It would be tedious to insist further on this point. It is the difference between understanding the



nature of a thing by looking *at* it, and, by looking *through* it, imagining something else. Only the first is a true aesthetic experience, though both may give pleasure.

The human imagination is not strong enough to *see* a large thing as if it were a small one, a dull clay thing as if it were a shining gold one. The faculty of aesthetic correction operates only in the presence of real things and not of imaginary ones. The designer who works at an exaggerated size, or in a material whose qualities are quite different from those of the final material, is in the dark as far as aesthetic intuition is concerned. For this reason, a wise artist will always work as close as possible to the realities of his problem—at the final size, in the final light, at the final distance, in the final materials, etc. As far as he can, he will avoid guess-work and act on first-hand knowledge. He will thus avoid the mistakes that are made almost unavoidable by the technical conveniences employed today. To avoid the mistakes, he will avoid their causes—and this means a return to simpler tools and methods.

A hundred years ago the art of printing with ink on paper was in a state of decline comparable at its worst to that of medallic art today. Great energy on the part of a few leaders, and much hard work on the part of schools of followers,



Figure 18. Gold zecchino of Pope Clement XII, 1730-1740. Well into the eighteenth century design is fast degenerating.



Figure 19. Gold zecchino of Pope Pius VI, 1775-1799. The end of the century shows little if any improvement. The catalogue published by Coin Galleries contained many examples from the nineteenth century, but it is significant that none of these was illustrated. We will not expose the artistic depths that Coin Galleries elected to veil.

has resulted in a complete reform of typography. While bad printing still goes on, it is possible to have printing done very well. A similar restoration of the art of printing in relief on silver and gold would be much easier, if the right leadership could be found and the right interest aroused.

The Church as such is not directly responsible for the quality of the things her servants buy. She has always shown herself indiscriminate, buying what the producers of any particular time produced—good works of art in healthy artistic periods, and bad works in unhealthy ones. The present collection of Papal coins and medals indicates this. It is the history of European coinage that we present, and we present it at the nadir of that history, with the clear intention of doing something to reverse the downward trend. The fault in this case lies not with the consumer but with the producer.

If artists are serious in their desire to restore all things to Christ, why should not religious medals be included? There can be no doubt that in their present state they are a disgrace to religion. Our



*Figure 20. Gold coronation medal of Pope John XXIII, 1958. This medal suffers not only from many of the Renaissance faults in conception already noticed, but, in addition, from the technical innovations introduced by the industrial revolution. If we are to have a numismatic art worthy of the noble uses to which it is put, we must give less attention to what is being done and more attention to a study of really optimum methods.*

medals are part of the disreputable garment in which we clothe the Bride of Christ, a garment in which it is hard for most people outside the Church to recognize her. Our medals are ugly. They are out of scale. They make wrong use of material. They are either ignorantly "traditional", by which is meant the copying of bad examples of the work of weak periods, or they are "modern"—supposed to be in a style representing the up-to-date and the progressive. In spite of holy subject matter, and in spite of presumably holy intentions on the part of buyers, they are unholy things. Because unholy, they are highly detrimental to the Faith which they are supposed to serve.

Please do not misunderstand. Beauty and ugliness are not a matter of refined satisfactions. Beauty, like goodness and

truth, is an aspect of Being. All things are beautiful to the extent that they *are*. It is not a matter of what I like, and you prefer, and so-and-so gets a thrill out of. Ugly things are merely maimed, disordered, degenerate things. The sensitive mind takes no pleasure in them, but that is not why we seek to make them better. The things we make and use we want beautiful because beauty is a sign that they are as God wants them to be. He places his seal of beauty on what His human children make well, just as He places it on those things that He Himself makes well—the vast and wondrous universal creation. We have no right to make things in any other way than properly. And this is particularly true in the case of things associated with religion. How can there be doubt or argument about such a simple proposition?



# ICONS ON MOUNT ATHOS

by CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS

*Mount Athos, as is generally known, is the cultural center and spiritual dynamo of Orthodox monasticism. The capital of the Holy Mountain is the village of Karyes. Here the central governing body, a committee of twenty monks, one from each of the monasteries, assembles twice a week. The church of Karyes is the most important on Mount Athos, and is called the Protaton. The author, who has made three sojourns among the Athonite monasteries and hermitages in the last eight years, here describes his impressions of the wall paintings in the Protaton.*

WHEN ONE ENTERS the Church of the Protaton, he is impressed by its length and height and by the superb frescoes that adorn its walls. All the walls, except those of the narthex, which appears to have been constructed or reconstructed at a later date, are decorated with frescoes that were painted at the beginning of the fourteenth century by one of the greatest masters of Byzantine iconography, Manuel Panselinos of Thessaloniki. No description, even the most detailed and eloquent, can give one an adequate idea of the beauty and power of these icons. I had read about them and discussed them with men who had spent months studying and copying them in this very building, but I was never able to imagine anything so sublime. These representations of sacred persons and incidents are not naturalistic, as some have asserted; nor are they products of man's arbitrary imagination. They are the forms of new, transfigured men, impressed upon matter by an artist who succeeded in rising above the realm of nature and the realm of the imagination to that of the spirit.

What impressed me most of all as I gazed at the figures depicted on the walls

was the quality perhaps best described by the term spiritual grandeur. Their postures, gestures, and above all their faces, express this quality in a striking manner; they express great seriousness of character, freedom from all pretense and servility, and great spiritual depth. Surrounded by these figures, one feels that he is in the presence not merely of paintings, but of beings, far more real than persons that he meets in everyday life. These sacred figures bear the clear impress of complete self-mastery, inner unity, and freedom from everything petty, from all impatience and weakness. Everything about them bespeaks great calm and tremendous inner power. The contemplation of these icons introduces one into a new dimension of being. It makes one experience these sublime qualities, arouses one's admiration for them, and awakens and strengthens the desire to acquire them.

The traditional means of attracting the attention of the beholder to the face, where these qualities are especially expressed, have been employed with exceptional skill by Panselinos. Thus, the halo that surrounds the head has been made very large and has been set in bold

*Dr. Cavarnos has taught philosophy at Harvard and at the University of North Carolina. He has done extensive research in Byzantine art and Orthodox Theology. This description of the icons in the Protaton is reprinted here with his permission from his "Anchored in God, Life, Art and Thought on the Holy Mountain of Athos", Astir Publishing Co., Athens, 1959.*



*SAINT PROCOPIOS. This and the two photographs that follow are details from frescoes in the church of the Protaton, a tenth-century basilica built on Mount Athos. They are the work of Manuel Panselinos, one of the greatest of the Byzantine masters. A systematic cleaning, sponsored by the Greek government, has revealed the religious power of these icons.*





*SAINT THEODORE. "Surrounded by these figures, one feels that he is in the presence not merely of paintings but of beings far more real than persons that he meets in everyday life. These sacred figures bear the impress of complete self-mastery, inner unity, and freedom from everything petty. Everything about them bespeaks great calm and tremendous inner power."*



*DETAIL FROM THE RESURRECTION. These photographs were made under poor lighting conditions, and the prints are injured by much too great contrast. Here we see St. John Baptist, Abel, and Eve and Adam. "These representations . . . are not naturalistic . . . nor . . . products of man's arbitrary imagination. They are the forms of new, transfigured men."*



relief by painting around it a red and then a white band, and setting the whole in a dark blue background.

As far as the colors are concerned, I noted also the following. They are beautiful, but not loud. Sometimes they show a striking disregard for nature. For example, a greenish hue has been used a great deal on the faces and other exposed parts of the body, especially at the edges. There is a large variety of colors, many of which are light. Blue has been employed frequently and extensively. Thus, the garments of many figures are blue, and the background is always dark blue. White also has been used very much, sometimes all by itself; sometimes in conjunction with black or brown; for instance, in the case of the garments of the Great Hierarchs (St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Theologian, etc.) black and white, and brown and white, have been employed to form a contrasted pattern of crosses; and frequently, in combination with other colors, to form light hues, such as light green, light red, and light brown. In the representation of certain saints, such as St. Paul and the Athonite hermits, a simple combination of colors has been employed, whereas a greater variety of colors and much orna-

mentation has been used in representing the Hebrew and Christian king-saints.

The bodily form of the older figures differs markedly from that of the younger ones; the face and body of Christ and other young figures are full, whereas the faces of the older saints, especially of the Athonite hermits, are thin, the cheeks sunken, and the bodies slender or even emaciated. But all the figures are large, so that even those on the uppermost of the four strips of frescoes that cover the walls of the church can be seen very distinctly by anyone with normal vision. These paintings were clearly meant to be, not merely ornamental, but *liturgic*, that is, to be seen in all their details and to evoke religious experience.

Fotis Zachariou, the artist and restorer who was sent to Athos a few years ago by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religion to clean these murals, has done an excellent job. Those that are very well preserved look as if they had just been done. Zachariou has avoided retouching the frescoes or repainting damaged areas, considering such a thing undesirable, as it involves the danger of altering or distorting the paintings. Thus the beholder has the satisfaction of knowing that what he sees is wholly the work of the artist.



# DECORATION

by GRAHAM CAREY

OUR WORD "DECORATION" is derived from the Latin *decēre* which means "to be fit". The primitive meaning of decorate was apparently to fit a thing for its purpose, to equip it with whatever was necessary for the fulfilling of its function. But with the passing of time, the word has changed its meaning, and today it emphasizes appearance, and the pleasures of appearance, rather than equipment for use. Today, to decorate is to add inessential but pleasant elements to a thing that already functions—as, to hang a wreath on a door, put flowers on a dining table, or carve patterns on a chair.

Today, the more general word "art" includes the primitive functional meaning of "decoration", for it is an essential of art that anything made is made to serve its purpose. Therefore, perhaps, we do well not to insist on the primitive meaning of the word, and to accept modern usage which refers to elements capable of giving innocent pleasure in addition to use.

But when we consider the uses to which decoration in our times is often put, we begin to wonder about "innocent pleasure". Too often the commercialist producer applies decorative elements to his work to distract attention from bad design and bad workmanship, or to give the false impression that what he has to sell comes from the pre-industrial world. And an aesthetic producer may perpetrate a very similar fraud, using decorative elements to disguise his technical ignorance of disciplines which he has never bowed his will to master. Ruskin, Morris and the other artistic reformers of the nineteenth century had a great

deal to say about true and false decoration, though they did not always supply us with satisfactory means of distinguishing between the two. False decoration, however defined, certainly continued unchecked, and in the twentieth century the Bauhaus offered a simple solution. The new theory was that *all* decoration is bad, and that the shapes of things should be determined solely by their functions and their structure.

The preaching of this simple doctrine certainly did a great deal of good in stripping "architecture" of accumulations of decorative rubbish, and it was instrumental in encouraging in public

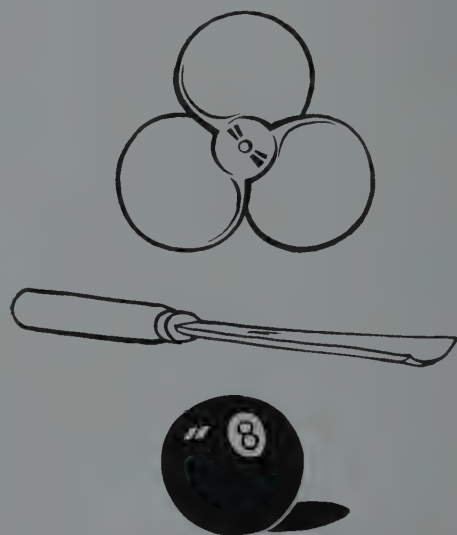


Figure 1. THREE PLAIN OBJECTS, beautiful though undecorated. The shapes of the propeller, the gouge, and the pool ball are purely functional. No decorative addition to these shapes could increase either their serviceability or their beauty. Drawing by Casimer Michalczyk.





*Figure 2. IT IS NO NEWS that most car bodies are designed for the profit of the maker rather than for the use of the owner. This \$3,100.00, 1960 model, with its six tail-lights and similar extravagances, is styled to satisfy illusions of prestige built up by advertizing. Beauty does not result from this method, but rather from adjustment to realities, such as structure and function.*

taste an appreciation of plain things. Men see more clearly today than they did in the Victorian time the beauty of such things as the bronze propeller of a motor boat, a wood carver's gouge, or an ivory pool ball. Such things are at once clearly undecorated and clearly beautiful. Were they decorated, they would be less pleasing than they are, for their beauty is an expression of their exact adaptation to their functions. If the gouge has a colored band painted around the handle, and the ivory ball a colored band and a number, these elements are not decorative but functional. The carver's work is more efficient if he sees at a glance in which drawer this particular gouge belongs, and the pool player can more easily call his shots if he can distinguish the balls by number. These are plain things and beautiful at the level of their simple serviceableness.

Was the generalization of the Bauhaus

then right? Is all decoration abnormal and to be avoided? If we had no other experience of the arts except that offered by the industrialist civilization of the last century, we might easily say Yes. But the works of mankind as a whole, at all times and in all places, force us to say No. It is not necessary to argue this or to cite examples. The beauty of plain things well made is a fact, but it is an even more obvious fact that the bulk of the finest things man has made throughout his history are decorated.

In what follows, then, I shall take it for granted that the sweeping generalization of the Bauhaus was wrong, that however much decoration has been and is abused, there is a place for it in that normal making of things which we call art. I shall suggest the conditions under which we can expect to find true decoration, and in the absence of which we can expect to find false decoration. What I

have to say is not based on what is written in books—either in etymological dictionaries or in aesthetic treatises—but on the observation of people in productive action, on craftsmen and their craftsmanship, artists and artifacts.

### THE INTEGRAL ARTIST

The key to this problem of decoration seems to lie concealed in the obvious statement that “things are made to be used”. Every artificial object has a maker and a user. These two figures—artist and patron—may be collective, groups rather than individuals; or in some cases the same individual may fulfill both functions at once. But the activities of making and using are themselves distinct, and each has meaning only in terms of the thing made and used. The elements of the problem are thus three—the artist, the patron, and the work of art. Let us begin with the artist.

When a child learns to walk, he is for many months concerned merely with the technical and functional aspect of his problem—in balancing his weight and

working his legs in such a way as to get from here to there. But when plain walking has ceased to be difficult, little boys will walk backwards and little girls will skip. Their energy and joy in conquering difficulties will lead them to make walking harder, and they will do this quite unconsciously. As soon as he can ride a bicycle easily, a child will want to ride it with “no hands”. If he grows up and becomes a pilot he will, if the owners of the plane let him, want to do stunts, as soon as he is expert enough for simple flying to become boring. We see the same principle at work in arts more transitive than walking, bike riding and piloting a plane.

As soon as a technique has been mastered, and the full attention of the artist is no longer required in order to perform the work, he is faced with a choice of either doing it mechanically while thinking about something else, or of making the technical job harder in order to keep his mind on it. This is not necessarily an ethical choice. There is no moral reason why he should choose to make his work



*Figure 3. IT IS NEWS to find cars on the American roads designed in strict adherence to the Bauhaus principle of structure and function. At half the price of Figure 2, this car is as beautiful as the ivory ball and the bronze propeller, and for the same reason.*





Figure 4. **DECORATIVE EXUBERANCE.** Grave marker by Zerubbabel Collins, died 1798. Old Bennington, Vermont. Collins was one of the most exuberant and prolific of the eighteenth century New England carvers. This type of decoration results from three factors; great skill, enormous output, and artistic freedom.

more difficult rather than not think about it. When we walk, we don't think about what our legs are doing. I am merely saying that the artist *has* a choice, and if he chooses to make his work harder, he is doing this for the satisfaction of his own inner claim to be an integrated person, to put as far as he can his complete self into what he is doing; and when he does this, he will be decorating his work with one type of decoration. We call this "exuberant" decoration or ornament, because its cause is in the exuberance of the artist's spirit. His nature as artist—that is, as a person engaged in giving a new nature to some material—can only fulfill

itself if his mind remains alert to the realities of the informative process. The artist can be a complete artist only if he is able to decorate what would otherwise be merely functional. And, other things being equal, the more skillful he is, the greater is his necessity for maintaining his true artistic status. The more skillful the weaver sitting at his loom, or the mason chipping away at his blocks of stone, the sooner the production of plain cloth and plain ashlar are going to pall and become drudgery. If he is free, he will weave colored stripes and patterns into his cloth, and carve his stones in other than rectilinear shapes.

A good example of exuberant decoration is the contemporary "jam session". Here, as often as not, top orchestral instrumentalists, highly skilled, often bored, tired of the exact playing of someone else's music, relax together in the most ancient form of orchestral music, and become for an hour or so composers as well as technicians, pattern-weaving masters as well as instrumental servants.

Whenever we get people who are highly skilled in their professions confronted with a monotonous exercise of their skill, and free to break that monotony, we have the conditions of exuberant decoration, and unless the artist is lacking in normal vitality, we will get it in fact also. Unless his physical or mental strength is unequal to the extra effort, the artist in every man will assert itself when these conditions are presented.

Figure 4 shows an eighteenth-century gravestone made by one of the most exuberant of the New England carvers.

## THE INTEGRAL PATRON

"Things are made to be used." Nothing is made without some purpose. The purpose of a thing is determined by the kind of thing it is. We call the person

for whose benefit the purpose is fulfilled the user of that thing, or the patron. He does not himself make the thing, but he acquires it and is responsible for its fulfilling its function. It is he who pays for it. In some cases, the thing that the patron causes to be made is for the benefit or commemoration or glory of some one other than himself. In such cases, if he is rich enough to do so, he will usually want to give more than the bare functional necessities of the gift. If a man buys a ring for his fiancée, he will probably want to make the ring more than a mere indication that she is betrothed, and he will have it decorated with the most beautiful stones he can afford to buy. Another man puts up a gravestone in memory of his father. The bare function of a grave marker is to prevent ignorant disturbance of the grave and to request prayers from passers by. But our man may want to do more for his father's memory than just this, and will add a long inscription and carved ornament that he believes to be beautiful. Or a group of people get together to build a church. The function of a church is to protect worshipers from the weather and from distractions while they are worshipping, but the church builders will hardly be content with this minimum. They will want this building to be worthy of its high purpose, and they will try to achieve this purpose in all sorts of ways, all of which involve the spending of additional money.

This sort of decoration we will call "enrichment". It does not derive from the artistic exuberance of the artist, but from the generosity of the patron. The necessary conditions for this type of ornament are three: 1) The artifact will normally be one concerned with doing honor to someone or something other than the patron himself; 2) the patron must desire to give more to this purpose than the bare functional essentials call

for; and 3) he must have the means to make actual the fulfillment of his desire. By enrichment, the giver is able to be more fully a giver than he would otherwise be.

Figure 5 shows an early American grave marker which has a considerable element of enrichment.



*Figure 5. DECORATIVE ENRICHMENT. Here the cutting is skillful but so prosaic that we must attribute the elaboration to the generosity of the patron rather than to the creativeness of the artist. The exact proportions of these factors cannot, of course, be estimated.*

## THE INTEGRAL ARTIFACT

Just as it is natural that an artist is more an artist when he is engaged in design as well as technique, and that a giver is more a giver when he can give freely and generously, so also symbolism is natural to the human mind. Ideas which are naturally associated with material things become so attached to them as to become parts of them. For example, because it is so much easier to understand where we are and what is around us in the light than in the dark, the light itself becomes a symbol of the truth, and the sense of sight a symbol of understanding. The hearth becomes naturally a symbol of family unity. A door, the material function of which is to separate this space from that, comes to stand for the separation between the ideas with which the





*Figure 6. DECORATIVE SYMBOLISM. Marker cut by Captain John Bull of Newport, R.I., 1734-1808. The decoration is ascetic rather than exuberant, austere rather than rich. The scythe of the relentless reaper, the all too swiftly running sands, and the winged soul, were symbols of death as much a part of the gravestone of that day as the name and virtues of the departed.*

spaces themselves are associated. The door of a house is not only the guarantee of property and privacy, but takes on the meaning of the abstractions it guards. The door of a church separates the dedicated space from the general space around it, and the word *profane*, which meant originally *in front of* or *outside the fane*, takes on a spiritual meaning. The gravestone symbolizes death, and all the vast complex of ideas which surrounds the death of the body and the life of the soul—and so on, without end. Whether we realize it or not, we live in a world of analogies, and it is in accordance with our human nature that we should do so.

Most material objects, therefore, can hardly be completely made without some reference to the ideas which they have come to symbolize. In addition to serving their material functions, most things (perhaps in more primitive times *all*

things) made by men express higher as well as lower references. And, indeed, in the broadest sense of the word *use*, these ultra-utilitarian aspects make it useful on another level, and complete its usefulness. An artifact is actually more itself if it serves on the intellectual and spiritual level as well as the physical one.

It is this amplification of the artifact itself that provides the third, and most important, kind of decoration. Not the fulfillment of the maker, nor of the giver, but of the thing made and given. Figure 6 shows an example in our series of gravestones. The scythe of death the reaper, the running sands of time, the winged soul, are all time-honored symbols which in eighteenth-century New England were almost as much a part of the grave marker as the name and virtues of the deceased. This design is beautifully cut, but it is ascetic rather than rich, and dutifully sober rather than exuberant. It

is difficult to find examples of any one of these three kinds of ornament which excludes the other two, but this stone comes very close to such an abstraction.

The ideal, of course, is an equal balance among the three, and this artistic perfection naturally grows out of the conditions of an artistic culture where artists are free, patrons generous, and people think in terms of analogies more readily than we do today. Figure 7 is an example of as close a balance as one can easily find.

But will an understanding of the conditions of true decoration enable us to achieve an artistic culture? Certainly not, unless there is a general understanding of the false position of the arts today, and particularly of architecture. There are strong vested interests blocking such understanding. The intellectual dead end to which architecture has now come is largely caused by giving lip-service to an iconoclastic theory which few if any builders still believe. Having reduced architecture to engineering, we find that architecture has disappeared, and we do not know how to conjure it back again. But decoration need not be destroyed. What it needs is to be purified and revitalized. As I have tried to show, normal decoration is an expression of human nature—exuberant, sacrificial, and analogizing—and no theory is going to change basic human nature.

Few architects of “the modern style” believe in function and structure as the sole determinants of architectural shape. Their work appears to be dominated by a belief in technology, the use of industrial techniques, in experiments with shapes free of meaning, and in progressivism. No one should be surprised that what they produce lacks humanity. There is no place in their system for exuberance in the individual workman. Therefore the generosity of the patron is canalized into quantitative rather than

qualitative types of expression, and about all he can do is to order things made bigger, or more of them. And a living architectural symbolism has long been forgotten.

We are faced with a choice between plain engineering on the one hand—grim but decent—and on the other a return to true decoration by the difficult means of restoring the humane conditions in which alone it can grow. There is no third way that is intellectually respectable, or that has any chance of restoring dignity and beauty to man’s works.



*Figure 7. WHEN MASONS WERE DESIGNERS, when prices were modest, and symbols were a natural language, a balance of the three decorative conditions was common. This “chrysanthemum border” by John Stevens the first, of Newport, R.I., 1646-1736, was obviously carved with enjoyment, and served the patron’s need for sacrifice. Symbolic elements, though somewhat perfunctory, are present.*



# THE SEED AND THE SOIL

by BEDE GRIFFITHS, O.S.B.

THE WORK OF A MISSIONARY is to sow the seed of the Gospel in a new land. The message of the Gospel must be preserved in its purity, yet it must at the same time be adapted to the land in which it is sown. In the past, this principle was often not understood. As a result, the faith was often transplanted to a foreign land without any attention being given to the nature of the people who were to receive it. Thus, when the Portuguese came to India in the sixteenth century, they brought with them the faith as it had developed in western Europe over the course of the centuries, without any modification. They brought with them not only the Latin language, the Latin liturgy and Latin theology, they brought them in their specifically Portuguese shape. Churches, altars, statues, pictures, music,—all the appurtenances of the liturgy were reproduced on Indian soil without any difference whatever. But they went even further than this. They deliberately forced their converts to adopt Portuguese habits of life. They gave them Portuguese names, made them dress as Europeans,—and because the Hindus were vegetarians and did not drink alcohol, they made them eat meat and drink alcohol.

This is a model for all time of how not to behave. Yet it must be admitted that with all their intransigence the Portuguese succeeded in firmly establishing the faith on Indian soil, and in keeping it free from all contamination. As a result, the Portuguese converts form one of the strongest groups in the Church in India at the present time. But the weak-

ness of their position has become, nevertheless, more and more apparent. Though firm in their own faith, they remain entirely cut off from the rest of India (above all, of course, in Goa), and are incapable of spreading the Gospel beyond their own ranks. It is this which has led in recent times to a reconsideration of the function of the Church in a missionary land, and to the recognition of the need to adapt the message of the Gospel to the people among whom it is to be preached.

This principle of adaptation is, in fact, as old as the Church herself. When the Gospel was originally preached in Galilee, it was preached in Aramaic. The Last Supper was celebrated in Aramaic, and the earliest gospel of which we have any record (St. Matthew's) was originally written in Aramaic. But when the Gospel entered the Greco-Roman world it had immediately to be translated and adapted to the new environment. Our present gospels represent, in fact, the first effort which was made to translate the Gospel into Greek. St. Paul, who was himself a Greek-speaking Jew, went a step farther; he began to translate not only the language but also the thought of the Gospel into Greek. This was a development which was to continue for several centuries, through Justin Martyr, Clement and Origen, to the great Greek Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. In the course of this time, the original Jewish message of the Gospel came to be expressed in terms of Greek thought, and a Christian theology developed making use of the language of Greek philosophy,

*Dom Bede is a Benedictine monk of Prinknash Abbey in England, whose long-cherished hope of establishing a monastic foundation in India, and of living there the full Benedictine life in a manner consonant with Indian ideals of poverty, has recently been realized.*



*The Tree as the Universe is one of the most universal of symbols. It is so widespread, and appears in different cultures in such diverse guises, that we are showing here four Cosmic Trees in illustration of Father Bede's article on "adaptation".*

*Here is a bronze example, about two feet high, from seventeenth-century India. The leaves and blossoms, and perhaps the birds, presumably represent the living beings of the vegetable, animal, and human realms. The two bulls standing at the base, the two monkeys, and the five-headed cobra above the sun wheel, are spiritual beings.*

while remaining true to the essential nature of the Gospel.

Nothing can show more clearly the working of this principle of adaptation in the Church. There was a time, with the first Apologists and with Clement and Origen, when there was a danger of the truth of the faith being contaminated by Greek philosophy—but with the Fathers of the fourth century, St. Athana-

sus, St. Basil and the two St. Gregories, the faith was firmly established on a basis of orthodoxy, yet it succeeded in incorporating into itself all that was vital in Greek philosophy.

We can watch a corresponding process of development in the liturgy. As soon as the liturgy entered the Greek world it was translated into Greek, and for two or three centuries this was its language



even in the Roman Church. But when, in the fourth and fifth centuries, the need for further development was felt, it was translated into Latin, Syrian, Egyptian, Armenian—into every language in which the need was felt. Thus, the principle of the Church from the beginning has always been that the Gospel should be preached and the liturgy should be celebrated in the language of the people.

With this development of language went a corresponding development of Christian art. Because the liturgy needed a building for its performance, and vestments for its celebration, and music for its chant, and pictures to awaken the piety of the people, a Christian art came

into existence—making use at first of the motives of pagan art and the structure of pagan buildings, but gradually developing its own distinctive style and calling forth all the genius of the people, Greek, Latin, Syrian and Egyptian. Byzantine art at its best, as in Sancta Sophia and the ancient churches of Rome such as San Clemente, is a marvellous blending of the genius of these different peoples inspired by the new vision of the Gospel.

Thus, the early Church provides us with a model of the adaptation of the language, the liturgy, the theology and the art of the Church to a new culture. A further development along the same lines can be seen in the growth of the



*Shaker painting, 18" x 24". The visionary who produced this entitled it "The Tree of Light or Blazing Tree". Below it she wrote. "The bright silver color'd blaze streaming from the edges of each green leaf, resembles so many bright color'd torches. N.B. I saw the whole Tree as the Angel held it before me as distinctly as ever I saw a natural tree. . . Seen and received by Hannah Cohoon in the City of Peace (Hancock, Mass.) Sabbath October 9th, 10th hour A.M. 1845, drawn and painted by the same hand."*



*Islam is represented by this marble window tracery in Sidi Sayyid's Mosque at Ahmadabad. Ventilation and illumination without glare from the fierce southern sun are the practical purposes of this screen. Its spiritual use is to combine the ideas of window symbolism—the Light and Breadth of the Spirit—with that of the Divine Benevolence—The Tree. In deference to the Islamic proscription of images, the branches of the tree are uninhabited, except by implication.*

Russian Church with its Slavonic liturgy (approved by the Pope) and its own distinctive architecture and iconography. Unfortunately in the Latin west, owing to certain circumstances, although the development of art and theology was no less splendid in its achievement (perhaps in part because of its very splendour), the liturgy became fixed in its language and structure, and the principle of adaptation was lost. Thus it came about that, when the new world was opened at the Renaissance, the Spanish and Portuguese carried the faith to America and to India in its rigidly Latin form, and no attempt at adaptation was made either in art or in theology.

Yet it is interesting to find that even at this period the Roman Church had not

lost hold of the principle of adaptation. In an instruction to the missionaries in China in the seventeenth century, the Congregation of Propaganda urged them to adopt everything which was of value in the native customs. "What could be more absurd," it wrote, "than to carry France or Spain or Italy or any other European country to China?" Yet this was, of course, exactly what was done—not only in the Far East, but in every country where the faith was planted.

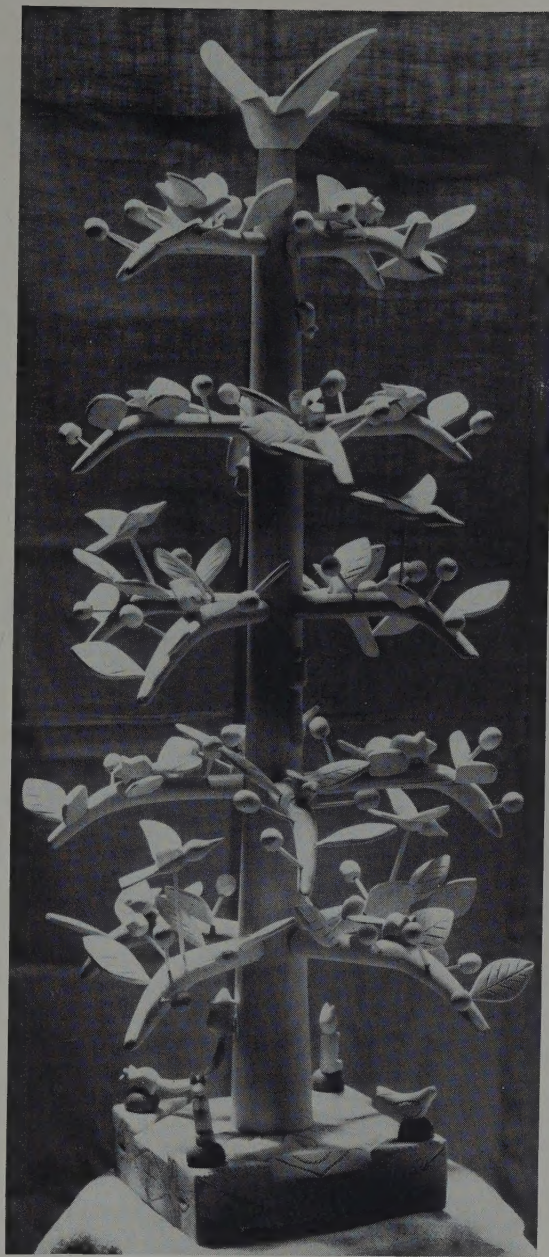
There were, however, two notable exceptions. The Jesuit missions in China and India, inspired by Matthew Ricci and Robert de Nobili (whose lives have recently been written by Mr. Vincent Cronin), strove to carry the principle of adaptation to its farthest extent. Ricci



lived as a Chinese mandarin, made himself a master of Chinese classical literature, and wrote an exposition of the Gospel in Chinese style. He also obtained permission from Rome to introduce a Chinese liturgy. All this movement, however, was stopped by the disastrous controversy over the Chinese rites and the decision of Rome against their adoption. In India, de Nobili was more fortunate in that he eventually received the approbation of Rome for his methods; nevertheless, the opposition which he encountered from the Portuguese rendered his work comparatively ineffective.

Yet Ricci and de Nobili remain the models for the missionary today. De Nobili realized that in India, with its profound religious tradition, there was no hope of winning the people to Christ unless he first mastered their sacred writings. He therefore adopted the dress and manner of life of a *sannyasi* (that is, an ascetic who has renounced everything in the service of God), in order to gain access to the knowledge of the Vedas, and made himself a master both of Sanskrit and Tamil (the language of South India where he was living). In this way, he was able to enter into the secret of Hindu religion and the Hindu way of life, and to interpret the Christian message in a language that all could understand. His success, in spite of opposition, was remarkable.

The whole culture and civilization of India—economic, political, social, artistic and philosophical—has from the beginning had a religious basis, and until a



*Cosmic Tree symbolism is an important part of the American Indian thought. This is a contemporary example, 2' 3" high, made by George Lopez of Cordova, New Mexico. The details exactly parallel the most typical old world forms. The straight shaft (axis mundi) connects the square earth, whose cardinal points have animal guardians, with the sun, represented by the eagle. The branches are full of the living creatures whose habitation the universe is. In the Sioux tradition people are represented by the fruit of the tree, while the birds and mammals stand for spiritual beings.*





*Unless Christianity is really "adapted" to a non-Christian culture, it cannot take root healthily in that culture. This is shown in the general failure of artistic expression among recently converted people. One of the few exceptions is the wooden carving of the Good Shepherd from Goa. Here is a valid piece of Indian sculpture, undisturbed by the confusions that usually afflict the artist in a recently converted culture. Courtesy of the British Museum.*

Christian has entered fully into this religious tradition and understood its inner meaning, he can never comprehend the culture of India. No merely superficial or rational knowledge is sufficient; he has to penetrate to the mystical significance which underlies it and which shapes the Indian conception of dance and music, architecture and painting, no less than religion and philosophy. Though some advance has now been made, this is a work which has still to be accomplished.

The Church as a whole remains outside the tradition of Indian culture and therefore makes no advance.

The first step to be taken is, no doubt, in the realm of language. It is necessary to translate the Christian message into the different Indian tongues. This has already been done in some cases, but much still remains. With this, it is to be hoped that it will soon be possible to translate the liturgy into the vernacular and to enable the people to participate fully, at least in the first part of the Mass, in their own language. But beyond this, the Christian message will never penetrate into the heart of the Indian people unless it is expressed in terms of Indian thought. This is a task exactly comparable to that which was achieved in the Roman Empire. Christian theology has to make use of Indian philosophy, just as the Greek fathers made use of Greek philosophy, and a new structure must be built which will be as true to the genius of Indian religion as that was to the Greek.

Yet it must be said that this is no easy task. The danger of "contamination" is here very real. Indian philosophy is fascinating, not to say seductive, and to remain true to the vision of the Gospel while expressing its message in terms of Indian thought is a task of the greatest delicacy. The Hindu is only too ready to accept Christ on his own terms and to absorb Christianity into the Hindu tradition. Only a saint will have the discernment to keep true to the Gospel and yet really enter into the inner spirit of the Hindu genius. De Nobili showed the way; it is for the sons of India to follow.

When the Church has become adapted to India in this way—in her language, her liturgy and her philosophy—then we may hope also for an Indian Christian art, not merely imitating superficially the motives of Indian art, but penetrating its soul and translating them into an Indian Christian vision of life.



THIS VOLUME HAS BEEN BOUND WITHOUT ISSUE(s):

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